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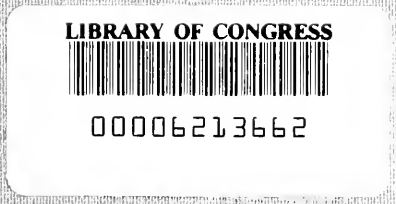

The Secret Obstacles in Washington's Career.

ADDRESS BY

HON. GEORGE C. HOLT,

AT

DELMONICO'S,

JANUARY 17, 1903.

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT,
NEW YORK,
JUDGE'S CHAMBERS.

December 4th, 1907.

Adrian H. Joline, Esq.,
54 Wall Street, N. Y.

My dear Adrian:

I duly received your new book, for which I am very much obliged. I read it through the other evening with great pleasure. I had read the first two articles before, one in the Independent, and one somewhere else. The paper on Martin Van Buren is capital, and your address on the text that "charity suffereth all things and is kind" is very good. You state somewhere that everybody except Washington and Mark Twain tells lies at some time. Did I ever send you my paper on "The Secret Obstacles in Washington's

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Career"? There is a case of a lie by Washington treated of in that paper, and if you have never seen it, I will send you a copy.

Yours Faithfully,

Geo. C. Hoer

The Secret Obstacles in Washington's Career.

By Hon. GEORGE C. HOLT.

It seems rash to try to say anything new about Washington. Every transaction of his life has been minutely investigated, every detail has been described in many books, and, upon the whole, no man of the Eighteenth Century is more thoroughly, accurately and universally known. Especially does it seem presumptuous to attempt to speak of Washington to the Sons of the Revolution, to all of whom the story is so familiar. But to us, at least, the story, although familiar, is never stale or dull; and I am sure that any appreciative and sympathetic paper about Washington, even if it contains nothing new or striking, will always be welcomed in this Society, among all whose members his name and fame are held in constant honor.

I shall say nothing new about Washington; but while recently reading afresh the story of his life and of the Revolution, I have been deeply struck by the unusual extent of the secret and hidden difficulties which embarrassed and obstructed Washington at many stages of his career; difficulties which were not apparent to the public at the time, and, in some cases, are not apparent to a superficial observer now, but which Washington knew and appreciated and had to conceal in his own heart. This is a heavy burden that leaders in great crises frequently have to bear, but to which few men, in judging their conduct, give adequate weight. Lincoln, for instance, although in certain personal characteristics the very opposite of Washington, met with certain kinds of difficulties, both in military operations and in civil administration, which were singularly similar to those which Washington had to endure. For a long time after the Civil War began Lincoln was forced to use subordinates whose treachery, dishonesty or incapacity he knew or suspected; and while his own mind was filled with the gloom of his own distrust of them, he was forced, in order to main-

tain the public faith in the war, to exhibit at all times before the people the appearance of a buoyant and sanguine trust in their fidelity and confidence in their capacity. At the very time when the press and the most zealous supporters of the war were denouncing him for the results of the blundering incapacity or intentional hostility to the cause of some of the officers in command, he was frequently himself convinced, in his own heart, that they were incompetent or half-hearted in the cause of the Union, while compelled by the exigencies of his position to pretend to believe in their ability and fidelity; and this was the hardest of the burdens which he had to bear.

Before entering upon a consideration of the particular difficulties which Washington had to encounter in the Revolution, it is desirable at the outset to observe how inherently distasteful to his character was the general nature of the work which he was called on to perform. Washington was forced by his convictions of duty to lead a democratic revolution against the English crown, but he was by birth, by associations, and by innate traits of mind, a patrician and a royalist. He was sprung from a long line of English gentlemen who had always been conspicuous for their attachment to the monarchy. The founder of his family in England was a Norman knight who came to England with or in the time of the Conqueror. One of this knight's descendants fought for Henry III. against de Montfort in the War of the Barons; another joined in the invasion of Scotland under Edward I. In the Civil War against Charles I. many members of the family fought on the royal side. One was killed at the siege of Pontefract Castle; another served in Prince Rupert's horse; another was Governor of Worcester Castle, and defended it heroically against a long siege by Fairfax until he was ordered to surrender it by Charles. The brothers John and Andrew Washington, who were the first settlers of the family in Virginia, probably emigrated to this country from apprehension of the hostility of the Cromwellian government. They undoubtedly selected Virginia, instead of any of the Northern Colonies, as their place of settlement for the same reasons which led so many others of the English gentry to settle there. It was the colony which best preserved

and reproduced the existing system of English country life, the service of the English Church, and the English variations and gradations of rank and station in the colonial society and government.

In such a society Washington was born and reared. All the influences of his early life tended to make him a royalist and a conservative. The atmosphere of the colony of Virginia in the eighteenth century was as fervidly loyal to the English crown as that of any English colony of the present day. In most of the English colonies which now exist the loyalty to the mother country is very marked, and in some of them the enthusiasm for the English royal family and the zeal for the English Church sometimes seem to us Americans almost ludicrous; but the enthusiasm with which a Bermuda family regards the photograph of the Queen on the mantelpiece, and the zeal with which the people of Halifax uphold the cause of the Church of England against all dissenters, are dull and torpid in comparison with the fervor with which the Virginia colonists regarded the government and the institutions of England in the eighteenth century. The memories of the great Civil War, of the execution of the King, of the Protectorate of Cromwell, of the Restoration, and of the great Whig revolution were fresh in the traditions of the Virginia families. The ancestors of almost all of them had fought in that great struggle on the Royalist side. Many of them had emigrated to Virginia to escape the vengeance of Cromwell or his followers, or the apprehended vengeance of William or his supporters. They had been taught by their ancestors the doctrine of the divine right of kings, and they believed it. They had perceived the evils which accompanied the revolutions and the civil commotions in England in the preceding century, and they believed that such evils were inseparable from all opposition to the monarchical idea. The colonial system which they had established in Virginia was essentially aristocratic. The agricultural labor of the country was slave labor. The agricultural business was carried on by great planters, owning immense farms. There was no small farmer or yeoman class. The life of the planters was large and liberal. Their homes were conducted with a lavish hospitality that recalled the feudal age. In this society

Washington was reared. He was born to large wealth. He was by nature, like most Virginians of that age, fond of the things which most Englishmen are fond of—country life and country sports; farming on a large scale; the supervision of the tenantry, workmen, and slaves; and the maintenance generally of a sort of feudal overlordship in his neighborhood. All his neighbors and friends lived the same kind of a life, and the natural development of a young fellow, sprung from such an ancestry, and born and reared among such surroundings, would have been to produce, in an ordinary man, a country, fox-hunting squire like those who formed the majority of the Tory party in the House of Commons during the reign of George III., or, in the case of a man of high intelligence and capacity, a Tory leader, like North. The last development which any one could have naturally expected in Washington would be for him to become the head of a democratic rebellion against any monarchy, and particularly against the English monarchy. To any one, therefore, who knows the working of the human mind, it is almost inevitable that he must have gone through a serious mental struggle in deciding to throw off his allegiance to the English crown, and in accepting the leadership of the forces organized to overthrow its authority over the American colonies. Indeed, it is almost certain, although there is nothing that Washington ever did or said to indicate it, that all through the Revolution doubts would arise in his own mind whether he had acted rightly in accepting the awful responsibility of joining in and leading a rebellion. It is impossible that a man of Washington's characteristics should escape those doubts at times. There are men whose nature seems to have intended them for revolutions. They are rebels by nature. They instinctively revolt at all authority. They are fond of change and variety, and instinctively oppose established authority. I do not mean to be understood as necessarily censuring men of this class. Some of them are men of very noble traits, who have exercised a great and splendid influence in revolutionary movements; but Washington was not only a man of no such qualities, but the whole bent of his mind and the characteristics of his nature were directly opposite. To him disorder was abhorrent. The

authority of existing government was sacred. The maintenance of law and of existing institutions seemed to his mind an obvious and fundamental duty, and any idea of rebellion against constituted authority was naturally repulsive to him. Many of the men engaged in the Revolution had doubts and showed them, not only of the wisdom of resorting to the rebellion in the first place, but also of its ultimate success. All of that class among the leading officers of the army whose devotion to the Revolution was not based on the highest convictions of duty, and who were simply serving in the army in the practice of a personal profession—such men as Lee, Gates and Arnold—were constantly in doubt whether they were not risking professional failure, and were constantly considering whether they should go over to the other side. Their attitude of mind was that of doubt constantly bordering on treason; but there is another kind of doubt from which the minds of men like Washington cannot wholly escape—the doubt which comes over great minds in those times of gloom and despondency which always occur in such a cause, whether so tremendous a responsibility as rebellion ought to have been undertaken at all. Moreover, the consciousness of Washington that such feelings were working in the minds of his coadjutors, and usually from base and selfish motives, constituted a constant burden on his mind. That was the meaning of the pathetic expression which he uttered after the discovery of Arnold's treason at West Point, when he exclaimed to one of his staff, "Whom can we trust now?" He knew the treachery of Lee, the machinations of Gates and Conway, and the disaffection and distrust of many others, and under such circumstances the exclamation upon the discovery of the treason of Arnold, "Whom can we trust now?" was not so much an exclamation of surprise at the treachery of Arnold, as of apprehension lest others should follow his example. In considering, therefore, the admirable equipoise and serenity of mind which constituted so notable an element of Washington's character, it should be always remembered that Washington, all through the Revolution, had to crush down and repress his own doubts, and to conceal his distrust of many of his chief lieutenants, and at the same time to maintain be-

fore the world an appearance of serenity of confidence in his cause, and in all those under him who were supposed to be engaged in promoting its success.

Another secret difficulty which Washington had to endure grew out of the striking varieties in the people of the different colonies and the diversities in the officers and troops which he had to command. He commanded an army made up of troops gathered from the different colonies in New England, the Middle States, and the South. The inherent differences between the peoples of the different colonies were much greater at that time than at present. The Puritans of New England, the Dutch in New York, the German and Quaker element in Pennsylvania, the Catholics of Maryland, the gentlemen of Virginia and the Carolinas, differed vastly from each other in their education and qualities of mind. They were a people unused to military discipline. They had the free and independent character of pioneers and frontiersmen, which in fact most of them were. Moreover, in the latter part of the war, the American army was reinforced by a large body of French soldiers, and always there was a large number of volunteer European officers in the army. Some of these men, like Lafayette and Steuben, were valuable officers, but a large number of them were conceited young coxcombs, who had obtained letters of recommendation from some influential European friends, whom Washington was obliged to receive and make places for in order not to offend their sponsors, but whose presence in the army was an unmitigated nuisance. It is difficult to imagine an army or a body of subordinate officers made up of more heterogeneous and incongruous elements. But there never was any intimation among the officers, or the rank and file, that Washington showed any favoritism towards any classes of troops, or regiments, or officers, and in the entire social and official relations between him and his officers there never was a suggestion of any personal preferences between them. Yet he must have felt them. He was by nature a patrician, with fastidious tastes and dislikes, and any coarseness of feeling or rusticity of manner was instinctively offensive to him to an unusual degree.

Another secret cause of self-distrust in Washington was the fact that he never had any technical training as a soldier. He had, in fact, the most admirable practical training in the camp life which he lived in the woods when a young man, while surveying in the western country, and subsequently in his long experience in Indian fighting, but he never had much technical training in military science in the European sense. It was an age in which the art of war was greatly studied as a technical science, and in which proficiency in military tactics was considered of great importance. The German army, under the father of Frederick the Great, and under Frederick himself, was perhaps the most highly trained and overtrained army that ever existed in Europe, but under Frederick the Great it had won great victories and achieved great reputation. Substantially all Europe was engaged about the middle of the century in military operations. It was an age of formality and precision, and there never was a time in which a more universal belief existed in the efficiency and importance of purely technical military knowledge in the conduct of war. All trained European officers could not avoid a sort of contempt for the American officers and troops. In Washington's first important military operation, he and all the other American volunteers who accompanied Braddock's column in its westward march could not fail to apprehend the slight estimation in which their military knowledge or capacity was held by Braddock and his officers. They were good types of the heavy English swell of those days. They started into the woods loaded down with the ordinary English officer's mass of baggage. They advanced into the ravines of the Alleghenies with no other precautions than if they were undertaking a march in Flanders, and they received the warnings of Washington and the other American frontiersmen with the same contempt with which they would have regarded the advice of a Flemish peasant. Probably Washington himself, during all the early part of the expedition, assumed that the judgment of these English officers, who had had so much more experience and knowledge of the art of war, was presumably more correct than his own. Indeed, it is not unlikely, even after the rout and destruction of the column,

which Braddock's fatuous refusal to heed his warnings had brought about, and after Washington had demonstrated his possession of the greatest military attributes by the skill and courage with which he collected the remnant of the scattered force, reorganized it and conducted its retreat to safety, that he did not himself recognize how inherently inferior to his own military knowledge and capacity was that of the foreign officers who had despised them. It is an extremely common error for men who have not had a professional training to exaggerate the importance of it, or, rather, to exaggerate the necessary superiority of those who have it over those who do not have it. The circumstances under which Washington was placed in the Revolution, particularly in the early part of it, were peculiarly calculated to develop this feeling in him. Charles Lee, very early in the war, was made second in command. He was a soldier of fortune, who had seen a great deal of military service in Europe. He was well versed in all the ornamental part of European drill and tactics. He was a conceited braggart, who never failed to express his contempt for everybody who had not a technical military training, and even for most of those who had. To all the officers in the army who had anything to do with Lee, he was constantly harping on the fact that the American officers had no technical training in what he called the art of war. All the foreign officers, good and bad, who joined the American army were men who gave the same peculiarly exaggerated importance to the technical knowledge of the European methods of carrying on war. Steuben, who was a man of inestimable value in introducing discipline and system into the American army, was inherently a German drillmaster, of the martinet type. He would have heard with entire approval, and without the slightest sense of absurdity, the descriptions of the floggings and system of discipline in the German army contained in Voltaire's "Candide" and in Thackeray's "Barry Lyndon"; and the great crowd of French and Continental officers who swarmed over here in the Revolution, because they had lost all their money in play at Versailles, or had failed to bring influence enough to bear upon Mme. du Barry or M. Maurepas to obtain a pension, all had the same inherent

disbelief in the ability of any man to carry on military operations who had not been trained in the Continental school. These foreign officers, with all their faults, had many virtues. They were bright, gay, witty and brave young fellows, with charming manners, and, although most of them were a hindrance rather than a help to the cause, their opinions had that subtle weight and influence which those of men in a more polished social set always have upon men whose youth has been passed, and whose manners have been acquired, in a less artificial society. Washington, therefore, probably felt all through the war, at least until near the end of it, an inherent distrust in his own fitness to command, a feeling that is very common among conscientious generals and leaders of hazardous enterprises of all kinds. This feeling it is essential to conceal, but it adds vastly to the weight of responsibility upon the man who feels it.

But the worst secret trouble that Washington had to carry hidden in his heart all through the war was the lack of cordial support by some of his officers and by Congress, either in the form of cold and selfish indifference to the cause, or, in some cases, of an actual and intentional treachery to it. Charles Lee, the second in command, we now know to have been a deliberate traitor, as genuine a traitor as Arnold, and in some respects a worse one, for Lee, unlike Arnold, never did anything for which he merited anything from the country, and never had any cause of complaint against the country. Washington did not know, however, and no one in this country, until the discovery of his correspondence in recent years, knew that Lee was a traitor. But Washington did know well that he was a volatile, feather-headed, conceited soldier of fortune, with no real capacity, while many people in the country regarded him as a great military genius. Then there was Gates, a small, thin type of the political general, of which this country saw so many in the War of the Rebellion. He was always scheming to get the military reputation which others deserved. Arnold won the battle of Saratoga, but Gates was popularly called the hero of Saratoga. Gates was always intriguing with Congress to advance his rank. He had a particular hostility to Washington, as men of his kind usu-

ally have to men of the type of Washington. Arnold, of course, was a traitor, but was a man of far nobler type than either Lee or Gates, and his treason probably never would have occurred if Congress had treated him with any justice, or even with common decency. Indeed, the Continental Congress was a constant hindrance to the efficient conduct of the war. Some of its members were corrupt, a great many of its members feeble, conceited, and vacillating, incapable of appreciating a man like Washington, or a brilliant soldier like Arnold, but entirely capable of admiring braggarts and flatterers like Gates and Lee. They paid little attention to Washington's advice; they left unheeded his most urgent letters; they left the troops unpaid; they interfered with the commissary department; they established, at Gates' and Conway's suggestion, at one time, a Board of War, which was a bald scheme to take the military supremacy away from Washington and give it to Gates; they ignored Washington's recommendations for promotion, and promoted political generals instead. It was with such supporters that Washington carried on the struggle. Who can describe the enormous addition to the load of care and anxiety resting upon the shoulders of a man in the situation of Washington, which arose from the ever present sense of the hostility or indifference of those who naturally should have been his leading supporters. It was not until towards the end of the war that Washington was freed from the clogs of all this treachery and incapacity. He then became free for the simple reason that Congress by a natural process lost all public respect and sunk to a position of no power or influence, and he alone remained the spirit of the war. But until that time he was obliged to carry concealed in his own soul the sense of treachery and inefficiency in all around him. This secret knowledge of the treachery and indifference of his supporters followed him in almost all his actual military operations. The fall of Fort Washington was directly due to the meddlesome interference of Congress against Washington's orders. The suffering at Valley Forge was perfectly needless. It was just as clear a case of an inefficient commissary system and a feeble war department as the shoddy uniforms under Cameron or the embalmed beef under

Alger. The lack of hearty and effective support hampered Washington all through the war. It would be too long a story to refer to all the details. Perhaps the Trenton campaign affords as characteristic an illustration of it as any other.

The fall of Fort Washington, which was probably needless and which was ordered by the pusillanimity of Congress, involved, of course, the retreat of the American army on the Jersey side of the river, and Washington fell back towards Trenton, pursued by the English forces, largely Hessians, under command of Cornwallis. Washington's troops had been enlisted for short terms, which were on the point of expiring. They were dispirited and discouraged; desertions were taking place day by day. Lee, with a considerable force, who had been originally stationed high up on the Hudson river, had been ordered by Washington to make a junction with him, and Lee, after repeated dawdling and delays, had started and was crawling along in the direction of Washington, but at the time of the Battle of Trenton had only reached Morristown. It was now perfectly apparent that he was treacherously resolved on disobeying Washington's orders and not forming a junction with him. About the time that Washington's little army had crossed the Delaware and was moving towards Philadelphia, pursued by the British forces, Congress, which was sitting there, broke up in a panic and moved to Baltimore. Washington formed his plan two or three days before Christmas to cross the river and attack at Trenton. As soon as Gates, who was second in command in Washington's own army, heard of his intention, he applied for leave to visit Congress on urgent personal business, the personal business being, in fact, to promote his own intrigues to supplant Washington and have himself put in command. Washington acceded to his request in imperturbable silence, and Gates departed for Baltimore in the track of the fleeing Congress. Washington divided his army into three divisions, one commanded by Ewing, one by Cadwallader, and one by himself, and planned to have each division cross the river in different places, a mile or two apart, and join after crossing. The weather had been very cold, and the river was filled with floating ice, and an ex-

tremely severe storm came on with sleet and snow. Washington with the greatest difficulty got his division across. When he landed on the other side, about midnight, he received word from Cadwallader that he had made the utmost effort to attempt to cross, but had not been able to do so, and received word from Ewing that he had concluded that the night was so bad that no one would attempt to cross, and therefore he had not even made the attempt.

What an hour! How bitter must have been Washington's sense of the treachery and incapacity of his supporters as he received these messages, surrounded by the shivering fragment of his army, by the bleak river, under the black night, pelted by the pitiless storm. Congress had abandoned the capital; Gates had followed them to intrigue for his removal; Lee lay dawdling in the North, hanging back and hoping for his chief's destruction; Cadwallader and Ewing had both found it to be impossible to do what he had just accomplished, and all this at the crisis of the country's fate. The term of the army's enlistment was about expiring. In a few days all that was left of his army would melt away. The hour had struck. It was the last chance. The cause was lost, if it was not saved that night! How many men, in that situation, would have given up the struggle, which seemed abandoned by gods and men! How many men, even if they had not given it up, would have burst out in raving execrations against the traitors who had betrayed him, and the incapables who had failed him. Washington made no complaint, exhibited no irritation, showed no hesitation. His purpose was fixed. No mischance of fortune could swerve that inflexible and irrefragable will.

> "The sun set; but set not his hope;
> Stars rose; his faith was earlier up;
> Fixed on the enormous galaxy,
> Deeper and older seemed his eye;
> And matched his sufferance sublime—
> The taciturnity of time."

My father, when I was a boy, often told me, with a breaking voice, the story of that night, as his father told it to him in his youth. My grandfather marched in the division which Washington led. After

the march had begun, Washington, who had personally supervised the start, and had ridden several times from one end of the line to the other to see that nothing was overlooked, took a place in the line in front of my grandfather's company, where he rode a long time just before him. He was mounted on a powerful stallion, which he curbed and guided with one hand; and my grandfather never forgot and in telling the story always spoke of the impression of masterful power and tremendous will which Washington's bearing gave as he rode on that horse, surrounded by his staff, all in grim silence, while the men plodded on on foot with heads bowed to the driving sleet, and their flintlocks covered with their cloaks to keep their powder dry. You all know the immortal story of that attack—how, in the dim Christmas morning, they burst on the British force at Trenton, still torpid from the Christmas eve debauch; how they bagged the whole regiment and swept them back across the river; how Washington returned and entrenched; how Cornwallis, who had recalled his portmanteau from the ship on which he had taken passage for England to receive the thanks of the King and Parliament for ending the Rebellion, came on with hot haste from New York to Trenton to take command; how he told his officers, one night, as they went to bed, that they would unearth the old fox in the morning; how the old fox that night, leaving his campfires burning, stealthily moved his entire force round the British rear without discovery, swooped down on the royal troops at Princeton, and again captured the entire force there; and how Cornwallis, his base of supplies being cut, had to evacuate New Jersey, fall back to New York, and leave New Jersey and the South to breathe again. There never was a more decisive moment in history. The little spark, which was almost stamped out, was ablaze again; and, as Latimer said to Ridley at a crisis almost as great in the long struggle for English freedom, the candle that day lighted never was again to be put out.

The usual commonplace critics thought the victory at Trenton and Princeton an instance of the fortune of war. Lord George Germaine said, "It was that *unhappy affair* at Trenton that blasted all our hopes." But to those who could detect real military genius it was

no "unhappy affair," no piece of luck. The great Frederick, than whom no man of that or of any age could better judge of military merit, and who well knew that such merit may as well be shown with a little force as with great armies, pronounced Washington's Trenton campaign one of the finest military operations of the century; and Cornwallis, no mean judge, after the fall of Yorktown, when some one in his presence praised the military ability of Washington in that campaign, said that it was no greater and really not so great as he had shown at Trenton. It was the knowledge that these great commanders had of the difficulties with which Washington was beset at Trenton which made them rank his work there so highly; but now, in the light of history, we can see that the difficulties which were obvious to Frederick and Cornwallis, and to all the rest of the world at that time, were, in fact, trivial and insignificant in comparison with those hidden obstacles which weighed on the will and depressed the soul of Washington, but over which, hidden in the depths of his own breast, his iron will took its resistless way.

Many other of the situations in which Washington found himself in the progress of the war might be referred to, in which the same difficulties presented themselves, arising from the treachery or inefficiency or stupidity of those upon whom he had a right to rely for support, but whom the welfare of the cause protected from criticism. A reference to specific instances in detail would occupy too much time. I will only refer to one other general class of difficulties under which Washington labored throughout the war. It was throughout largely a defensive war. Washington was obliged almost always to adopt a Fabian policy, eluding large engagements, avoiding decisive battles, and pursuing a general policy of harassing the enemy and protracting the war and avoiding decisive operations. It has been often remarked that he never won a battle; that is, that he never completely triumphed in an actual active engagement conducted with a force large enough to constitute a battle in the usual meaning of the word; but the truth is that he was always, until very near the end, fighting at an enormous disadvantage, with untrained and ill-disciplined troops, unfurnished

with adequate supplies, and with forces less in number than those drilled regular soldiers who were usually opposed to him. As in most of the cases of rebellion by a poor colony resisting the operations of a country far from its base of supplies, it was Washington's obvious policy to avoid decisive engagements, to harass and wear out his opponent, and to wait for especially favorable opportunities before hazarding the risk of any decisive engagement. Washington was not by nature a slow general. When the opportunity came he seized it, and struck as quickly and sharply as most of the great generals in history, but the solid judgment and the prudence which were characteristics of his mind made him realize at the outset the danger of rash action and the importance to the colonies of protracting the struggle as a means of wearing out the patience of the English people and bringing about a change in the administration which should substitute Chatham and Burke and Fox and the other friends of the colonies in the place of the administration of Lord North.

Washington, therefore, from the outset adopted in a general sense the policy of avoiding decisive engagements. The result was that all his enemies and many of the genuine friends of the cause were dissatisfied. It is always easy to criticise the over-prudent general, and frequently the criticism is entirely just. There are many men who, placed in command of an army, take all the time so exaggerated a view of the difficulties opposing them that they never willingly act at all until practically assured of the certainty of their success. Such men often are not cowards, but they are almost as inefficient, and when they are found in command of military operations they cannot be removed too quickly. The difficulty is to discriminate between that kind of a man and one who has simply the proper amount of caution and prudence to avoid rashness in action. It was difficult to distinguish, for instance, at the outset, between such generals in the Civil War as McClellan and Thomas, and after the country had had such an experience of General McClellan's method of conducting operations that it had come to adequately comprehend his shortcomings, a great many men rashly inferred that the deliberateness and delays of Thom-

as indicated the same traits and characteristics. Until almost the very end of the Revolution Washington was never free from criticisms for his dilatoriness and procrastination. That was the cry of all those little soldiers who were envious of him and ambitious to usurp his place, and of all their supporters, but there were also many excellent but shortsighted people who genuinely believed that he was censurable in those respects. John Adams, at a famous public dinner in Philadelphia one evening, brought about great cheering by rising and proposing as his toast "a short and violent war." On the same day that Lee was captured by the English he wrote to Gates a letter from which the following is an extract:

"Entre nous, a certain great man has been most damnably deficient. He has thrown me into a situation where I have my choice of difficulties; if I stay in this province, I risk myself and army, and if I do not stay, the army is lost forever. Our councils have been weak to the last degree. As to yourself, if you think you can be in time to aid the general, I would have you by all means go; you will at least save your army."

This was the tone with which Washington was discussed by all the men of that class in the army and in the country, and this dissatisfaction had grown until it led, in 1777, to the organization by Congress of a Board of War, of which Gates was made president, with permission to serve in the field should occasion require it. This put him practically in command over Washington. Mifflin, another inefficient general, was made a member of this board. Conway, a nobody, was made inspector general of the army, with the rank of major general, and all this was done against the advice of Washington and was understood generally as a proceeding to force him to resign. The scheme, of course, failed, and as the war went on, he, more and more, became the soul and spirit of the Revolution. His detractors sunk in public estimation, Congress shrunk into its natural obscurity, and in the last years of the contest the whole power and authority of the country seemed to have gravitated by an irresistible attraction into the hands of Washington and to be represented by him alone. But until that

time, during all the earlier part of the struggle, and to some extent during the entire struggle, he was hampered and impeded at every turn by a large body of either open enemies or foolish friends, neither of whom he could oppose, and toward both of whom he was obliged to maintain apparent relations of courtesy and good feeling.

But it was not alone in military operations that Washington met with secret obstacles greater than those that were obvious. When he was called back from his retirement, after the organization of the government under the constitution, during the entire period of his eight years' service as the first President, he met with the same rancorous and treacherous opposition from open enemies and from pretended friends. It was at a time, like most periods after a civil war, of bitter animosities and virulent hatreds. There probably has been no time in the history of this country in which scurrilous libels against everybody connected with public life, Washington included, were more numerous, more reckless or more malignant. The breadth of the difference between the extreme democracy of the supporters of the American Revolution and the views of those who remained loyal to the English crown, and the vehemence and fury which the French Revolution had given to the controversies which raged over the same fundamental political questions made the time one in which it is difficult for us to imagine the intensity and ferocity of party spirit. This party spirit exhibited itself in every section of American society. Its existence in Washington's own cabinet was a fruitful source of irritation. Jefferson was an enthusiastic supporter of the French Revolution and upheld M. Genet and the party which supported him in this country, whereas Hamilton and Knox, the other members of the cabinet, while sympathizing with the good features of the French Revolution, joined with Washington in deprecating its excesses. Jefferson was always charging Hamilton, and inferentially Washington, with hostility to the government as established and with trying to set up a monarchy. In one of the discussions in the cabinet about the Genet affair, Knox, a fine, bluff, hearty, old soldier, without any tact, produced and passed around as an amusing caricature, a scandalous libel recently published called

"The Funeral of George Washington," representing the President placed on a guillotine, about to be executed, a horrible parody of the then recent execution of Louis XVI. Jefferson, in writing an account of this meeting, says that "the President at this burst forth into one of those transports of passion beyond his control, inveighed against the personal abuse which had been heaped upon him, and defied any man on earth to produce a single act of his since he had been in the government which had not been done on the purest motives. He said he had never repented but once having slipped the moment of resigning his office, and that was every moment since. In the agony of his heart, he declared, he would rather be in his grave than in his present situation, that he would rather be on his farm, Mount Vernon, than to be made Emperor of the world, and yet, said he, indignantly, "they are charging me with wanting to be a King." Jefferson naively adds, "All were silent during this burst of feeling; a pause ensued; it was difficult to resume the question." Washington, however, who had recovered his equanimity, put an end to the difficulty; there was no necessity, he said, for deciding the matter at the present, and the regular business of the cabinet proceeded.

The attitude of Washington in the Genet matter, and generally in relation to the war then waging between France and England, was itself a striking illustration of the secret difficulties which he was obliged to surmount while President. He had been for seven years at the head of an army, conducting a great war against England. He had brought that war to a triumphant conclusion, but he had been enabled to do that by the simple fact that France had helped us with men and money, had finally formally declared war against England and had sent a French army and fleet to co-operate with the Continental army, with which assistance the capitulation at Yorktown was brought about. Under such circumstances it is impossible to exaggerate the feelings of gratitude which Washington, as well as the entire American people, held toward France. Probably there was no man living for whom he felt a warmer personal friendship than the Marquis de Lafayette. Although he probably retained no especial

rancor toward England, yet it would not be in human nature for any man to have carried on such a war against England for seven years, and to have seen so clearly the way in which that war was conducted by the fatuous George III., and his still more infatuated advisers, without retaining a considerable degree of prejudice and umbrage against that country. Moreover, at the time that M. Genet came to this country, the French Revolution had broken out. All the world recognized that it was the American Revolution and the doctrines which it had made prominent and popular in Europe which, more than any other single cause, had given rise to the French Revolution, and every American who disbelieved in a monarchical system hoped that the outcome of the French Revolution would be to establish free government in France, and, if possible, throughout Europe. Under these circumstances the French Revolution sent M. Genet to this country as its ambassador, and the substance of his mission was to induce us to ally ourselves with France and to fight England and the rest of Europe as their allies. The project appealed to the natural sympathies of the American people, and, with especial weight, to the national sense of gratitude and of obligation to a country which had been of the greatest service to us in the time of our most extreme necessity.

These considerations it is certain appealed to Washington personally with the same weight and strength with which they did to the country generally. But it was perfectly apparent that it would be suicidal for this country, still weak and almost ruined with its own war, to embroil herself in the European complications connected with the French Revolution. Washington, therefore, looking calmly at the entire question, decided to preserve an absolute and impartial neutrality. When M. Genet arrived in this country, he was received by the American people with unbounded enthusiasm, and was led to believe from the extreme popularity of his cause and of himself that he could virtually coerce the government into an alliance with the people of France. But Washington was inflexible, and finally, against violent public opposition, insisted upon M. Genet's recall. So, later, at the close of his administration, in his farewell address, when he was con-

scientiously giving to his countrymen as a last legacy his deliberate judgment as to the wisest public conduct of this government, it was not an easy thing for him to advise his countrymen against any passionate attachment of one nation for another. This is his language: "Nothing is more essential than that permanent inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others should be excluded; and that in place of them just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The nation which indulges towards another an habitual hatred or an habitual fondness is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its hatred or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and from its interests. Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. * * * So likewise a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation facilitates the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no common interest exists. * * * It leads also to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly to injure the nation making the concessions, by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained and by exciting jealousy, ill-will and a disposition to retaliate in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld."

That was the deliberately accepted attitude of Washington in the great crisis of the French Revolution, by which he made himself appear to the short-sighted among his countrymen and his friends as having the same feelings toward France as toward England, and as being entirely unaffected by the ordinary sense of gratitude and personal friendship which influences other men. And yet, at the same time that this position of inflexible neutrality was taken in his public action and in his public papers, we find in his correspondence a letter written to Madame Lafayette, after hearing that her husband was in prison, in which he remitted to her the equivalent of 200 guineas. It is a deeply interesting letter, not only as showing the warmth of Washing-

ton's personal feelings, but as exhibiting the awkwardness with which a truthful man equivocates a little when it becomes essential to induce a friend in need to accept a gift. He writes, "If I had words that could convey to you an adequate idea of my feelings on the present situation of the Marquis Lafayette, this letter would appear to you in a different garb. The sole object in writing to you now is to inform you that I deposited in the hands of Mr. Nicholas Van Staphoost of Amsterdam 2,310 guelders Holland currency, equal to 200 guineas, subject to your orders. This sum is, I am certain, the least I am indebted for services rendered by the Marquis de Lafayette, of which I never yet have received the account. I could add much, but it is best perhaps that I should say little on this subject. The uncertainty of your situation, after all the inquiries I have made, has occasioned a delay in this address and remittance, and even now the measure adopted is more the effect of a desire to find where you are than from any knowledge I have obtained of your residence."

It was with such feelings in his heart toward the country that had helped us in the Revolution, and toward the dear friend who had shared with him in the toils and glories of the war, and who was then in deadly peril of his life, that Washington put aside personal predilection and followed the path of public duty.

The fact that Washington's career was beset with so many latent difficulties explains, to a great extent, that singular growth in admiration of which every one who studies his life is conscious. The character of Washington, as of all men and all things of the supremest excellence, seems, at first view, simple. But as you study it, the sense of its surpassing greatness grows upon you. It is like his monument. A stranger first visiting the city of Washington notices when he alights from the train a plain stone shaft arising in a distant part of the town. On being told that that is the Washington Monument, he will probably experience at first a feeling of disappointment. It is so unornamented, so plain, so common in design. But as he stays in the city the impressiveness of it grows upon him more and more. Wherever he goes it is in sight; wherever he is, it rises silent before him. At the Capitol,

at Georgetown, at the West End, at Arlington, at Mount Vernon, from everywhere in the city and from everywhere for miles around, he sees it, and as the time passes it grows and expands and uplifts, until at last its august and majestic presence dominates and dwarfs all else about the place. How fortunate that those who designed this memorial should have comprehended its requisites so well! Any monument was, of course, in one sense superfluous:

> "Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
> What needst thou such weak witness of thy name?"

But if any material memorial is to be, how well it is that it be so austere, so simple, so majestic, and that it should have such a mysterious and subtle power to lift the hearts of those under the influence of its silent presence up to a comprehension of the greatness of the soul which it so fitly commemorates.

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